Met Office

March 2014

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1981-2010.

UK overview

March was quite a contrast to the three wet and stormy winter months which preceded it. At times, the weather was dominated by high pressure, particularly around the middle of the month, and there were several warm days giving an early taste of spring. Some areas, most especially western Scotland, did have wetter weather at times.

It was another mild month, with the UK mean temperature 6.7 °C, which is 1.2 °C above the 1981-2010 long-term average, and the number of air frosts was below average. The UK overall received 84% of average rainfall: East Anglia was the driest area, and only a few small areas exceeded their monthly average. It was sunnier than normal everywhere except the west of Northern Ireland; the UK overall received 124% of average sunshine hours.

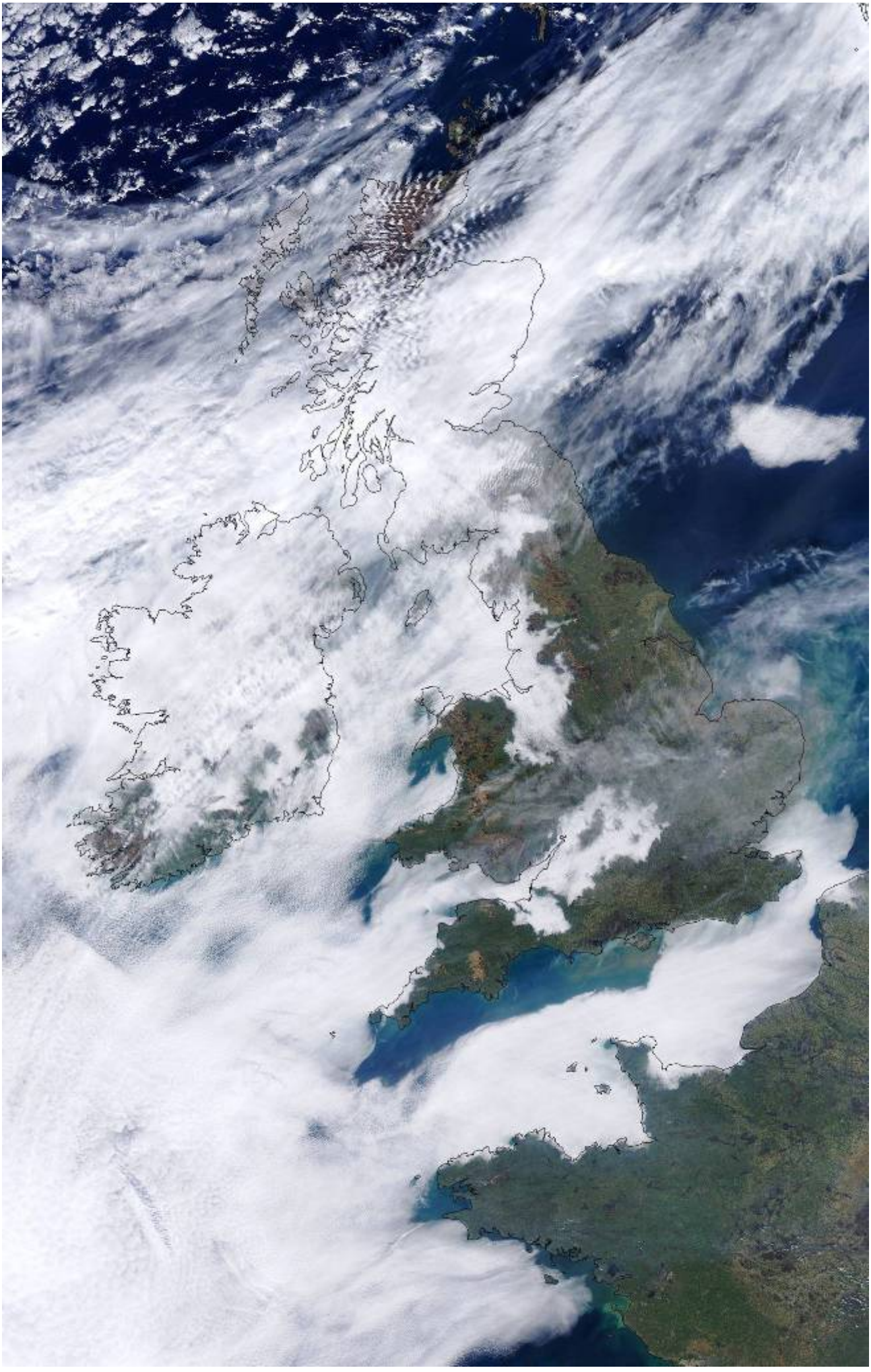
A maximum temperature of 20.9 °C was recorded at St James's Park (Greater London) and Santon Downham (Suffolk) on the 30th. A minimum temperature of -6.8 °C was recorded at Redesdale Camp (Northumberland) on the 24th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 GMT on the 7th, 146.8 mm of rain fell at Ennerdale, Black Sail (Cumbria). Wind gusts of 75 mph were recorded at Fair Isle and Sella Ness (Shetland) on the 7th. A snow depth of 7 cm was measured at Spadeadam (Cumbria) at 0900 GMT on the 22nd.

Weather impacts

Although there were spells of fine early spring weather, there were also incidences of dense fog during the month. This caused some travel disruption on roads, with a number of accidents reported across parts of the South West, particularly Somerset on 13th, and flights were delayed at airports across the country.

The following images are from the NERC Satellite Receiving Station, Dundee University

Satellite image of snow cover across the Scottish mountains on 12 March 2014



Satellite image of fog cover across the UK on 13 March 2014

England diary of highlights

The month opened with a few days of unsettled weather, but by mid-month high pressure dominated and the country saw a welcome respite to the rain and wind that had defined the preceding winter season. However, dense - and in some places persistent - fog were a problem at times. Some fine and at times warm weather was enjoyed by many, heralding the first spell of more than one or two dry days together since early December. Often sunshine was plentiful, giving rise to some warm days, although nights remained chilly in places. Somewhat more unsettled weather returned later in the month.

The temperature for the month overall was 1.3 °C above the 1981-2010 average. Warm sunny days led to daytime maximum temperatures 2.0 °C above average, and these were particularly high in the east, with Suffolk and Kent having their equal-2nd highest March maximum temperatures in a series from 1910. In contrast night time minimum temperatures were closer to average. Rainfall was 77% of average, and East Anglia had half of average. It was a sunny month everywhere, with 131% of average hours of bright sunshine.

1st to 7th:

There were scattered showers in the west and rain in East Anglia during the morning of the 1st but these cleared to leave a dry and bright afternoon. The 2nd saw scattered showers for many areas in the morning but a band of heavier rain spread from the west during the afternoon to reach the east by evening. There were scattered showers for the southern half of the country on the 3rd with northern areas mainly dry. The 4th was generally dry with sunny spells although rain affected the far south-west at times. A mainly dry and bright day followed on the 5th with only an isolated shower in the north-east and temperatures reaching 14 °C in London. The 6th was mainly bright with only a few scattered showers in western and central areas although a band of heavier rain reached northern areas later in the evening with 45 mm recorded at Kielder Castle (Northumberland). A band of rain moved south-east during the morning of the 7th and cleared the country to leave a dry and sunny afternoon.

8th to 17th:

High pressure dominated from the 8th till the 17th with dry and bright conditions for all areas, although central and southern areas had early morning fog. The 9th saw Gravesend (Kent) record 20.5 °C. The north-westerly winds strengthened on the 15th and 16th and the high pressure slipped to the south with gusts above 45 mph for many northern and central areas.

18th to 25th:

The 18th saw a change with showers spreading in from the west, although many eastern areas remained dry. The 19th was mainly dry and bright but breezy in northern areas. A bright start on the 20th but a band of rain spread from the north-west during the afternoon to reach the south-east by evening. Winds gusted to over 50 mph in coastal areas. The 21st started dry but scattered showers developed during the afternoon. The 22nd was another day of sunshine and showers with hail and thunder in some central areas. The showers were more scattered on the 23rd with the heaviest in the east with hail and thunder for areas around Lincolnshire, Humberside and Norfolk. The 24th started frosty but sunny with Redesdale Camp (Northumberland) falling to -6.8 °C overnight although a band of rain reached the far south-west by midday and slowly spread north-east. A band of rain affected the central spine of the country on the 25th, but either side of this it was mainly dry with sunny spells.

26th to 31st:

An easterly wind developed on the 26th driving showers mainly into eastern areas falling as rain, hail and snow for higher ground. The showers were more widespread on the 27th and again included sleet and hail with thunder in some central areas, remaining cool in an easterly wind. The 28th was again a day of sunshine and

showers with hail and sleet, particularly in the east; there were thunderstorms in the West Midlands. A mainly dry, sunny and pleasantly mild day followed on the 29th although it was cooler on eastern coasts with an onshore wind. It remained mainly dry and sunny on the 30th with Santon Downham (Suffolk) and St James Park (Greater London) reaching 20.9 °C. It turned more unsettled on the 31st with outbreaks of rain mainly in western and central areas but the east remained mainly dry.

Wales diary of highlights

The month began with showers and somewhat unsettled conditions. By mid-month warmer and sunnier weather prevailed, but with lingering fog in some areas particularly around the 12th and 13th. The second half of March saw a return of more showery conditions but these were still interspersed with sunny and warm spells.

The mean temperature was 1.1 °C above the 1981-2010 average, but some cold nights meant minimum temperatures were much closer to average than maximum temperature and the month saw the first occurrence of daytime temperatures above 20 °C. It was a dry and sunny month with 68% of average rainfall and 127% of average hours of bright sunshine.

1st to 6th:

The 1st was mainly dry with some sunny spells and isolated showers, particularly in the north of the area. There were showers before a band of rain crossed from the west by mid afternoon on the 2nd. The 3rd had sunshine and some showers, mainly in the south of the region. It was generally dry and sunny on the 4th. The 5th was dull with patchy rain moving into the north in the late evening. Dull with patchy rain or showers on the 6th.

7th to 19th:

The 7th was dry and sunny. It was warmer on the 8th, with sunshine. The 9th was warm with 17.9 °C at Llysdinam (Powys) and sunny with some cloudier conditions on the north coast. Dry with sunshine on the 10th. The 11th was dry and sunny apart from the very south-east of Wales, which was cloudier. It was warm with sunshine on the 12th although with fog in the south-east of the area. The 13th was generally dry but with some fog in the morning, lingering on the west coast for most of the day. The 14th and 15th were dry with sunny spells. The 16th was dry with sunshine but cloudier around the coast. It was mainly dry but cloudy on the 17th, with some very light and patchy rain in the north. It was cloudy with rain passing through in the morning of the 18th, with showers in the afternoon. The 19th was dry but mainly cloudy.

20th to 31st:

Cloudy then wet with a band of rain through the afternoon, clearing by the evening on the 20th. The 21st and 22nd had sunshine and showers. Drier with isolated showers on the 23rd. The 24th started with sunshine but soon clouded over from the south-west with rain by the afternoon, clearing late in the day. Dry with some sunshine in the west and south with rain from midday in the east and north of Wales on the 25th. The 26th was dry at first then showers from the east developed by mid-afternoon. Dry at first with some sunshine on the 27th then showers merging into rain from the east by mid-afternoon. The 28th started brightly but scattered, heavy showers developed during the afternoon. The 29th was dry with sunny spells. The 30th was mainly dry and sunny with Porthmadog (Gwynedd) recording 20.7 °C. The 31st started brightly but showers developed widely during the afternoon, some heavy with thunderstorms in western areas.

Scotland diary of highlights

The month began with somewhat unsettled conditions bringing rain for most areas and strong winds at times. After a spell of dry and bright weather before mid-month, the unsettled conditions resumed, particularly

across western areas. The last week was colder with easterly winds bringing rain or showers at times and some snow at higher elevations, but there were also some sunny spells.

March was a warmer than average month, with the mean temperature 1.3 °C above the 1981-2010 average. North-east Scotland had a rather dry month, with less than half the average rainfall for parts of Moray. However, western and southern Scotland received near average rainfall, with the overall figure for Scotland 92% of average. It was a rather sunny month for all areas except the south-west, with 117% of average overall.

1st to 9th:

Dry in the east on the 1st with some scattered showers in the west but rain spread into the west during the evening. Mostly dry and bright at first on the 2nd but rain spread across the country from the west later. After some early rain in the north, the 3rd was a day of scattered showers and bright spells for most areas. It was a wet start in the north on the 4th but the rain became increasingly patchy as it moved south. A wet day in the west on the 5th, especially in the Highlands with 45.6 mm at Achnagart (Highland), but the rest of the country was mainly dry apart from the north-east. A dry start for most of the country on the 6th but rain spread from the west later in the day, heavy in the south-west with 52.6 mm at Eskdalemuir (Dumfries and Galloway). Wintry showers or longer spells of rain affected most areas on the 7th, with strong to gale force westerly winds. A wet start for most areas on the 8th but the rain cleared later in the day. Winds remained strong with a maximum gust of 73 mph at Edinburgh, Blackford Hill. A dry start in the east on the 9th but rain spread across the country from the west through the day and into the evening.

10th to 13th:

It was dry and bright for most areas on the 10th as high pressure built up across the country. Mostly dry and bright again on the 11th and 12th. The 13th was mostly dry again apart from some light patchy rain from a weak front moving south across the country.

14th to 23rd:

It was wet and windy in the north and west on the 14th, but the rain became more patchy as it spread south. Mainly dry but cloudy with strong westerly winds on the 15th with the best of any sunshine in southern areas. It remained dry, bright but windy and mild on the 16th with winds gusting to over 60 mph in the Northern Isles and temperatures reaching 17 °C in Kincardineshire. The winds eased slightly on the 17th but showers affected western areas and the Central Highlands. It was another windy day on the 18th with rain or showers especially in the south. Strong winds on the 19th with rain in some western areas; otherwise it was mainly dry. A wet start on the 20th as a cold front spread south bringing heavy rain and strong to gale force winds to most areas. Edinburgh, Blackford Hill recorded a maximum gust of 73 mph and it also became colder with some reports of snow during the evening. Frequent blustery showers or longer spells of rain for most areas on the 21st with some strong winds and snow on higher ground. Scattered showers for most areas on the 22nd, some of them wintry, but mainly dry in the east. Another showery day on the 23rd but the showers mainly died off later in the afternoon.

24th to 31st:

It was a dry and bright day for most on the 24th but some cloud and rain edged into the west during the evening. Patchy rain or showers for many southern areas on the 25th but mainly dry in the north. Mainly dry on the 26th with sunny spells for many areas, especially in the east. A dry start for most areas on the 27th but a weather front spread across the country from the east bringing rain to most areas. However, it was mainly dry further north. A cloudy start for most areas on the 28th with some rain pushing up from the south through the day, but it was drier and brighter in the north-west. Dry for most areas on the 29th with some rain in the west. Scattered showers in the west on the 30th with fog in the east at times. There was patchy rain in western areas on the 31st with the east remaining mainly dry, but cool in an easterly wind.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

The start of the month saw showers interspersed with sunnier, drier spells. Around mid-month there was a period of dry, settled weather with a good deal of sunshine as high pressure dominated. However, unsettled conditions resumed toward month end with periods of rain and showers.

The mean temperature was 0.5 °C above the 1981-2010 average. It was slightly drier than average, with 90% of average rainfall. There was 94% of average sunshine hours.

1st to 9th:

The 1st was a showery day almost everywhere. Initially dry on the 2nd then rain in the morning which cleared to scattered showers. The 3rd was sunny and mainly dry until rain spread into all areas during the evening. There were scattered showers overnight and throughout the 4th but there was a good deal of sunshine too. A dry start on 5th but showery rain affected most from mid-morning. A few showers overnight and at first on the 6th before more general rain, heavy in places spread east in the afternoon. Rain continued at first on the 7th giving way to a day of scattered blustery showers and sunny periods. A band of rain spread from the west during the 8th with strengthening south-westerly winds. Patchy rain affected central areas for much of the 9th with a band of heavier rain spreading into the far west later in the day.

10th to 19th:

An area of high pressure resulted in fine, dry and sunny weather through this period after occasional early frosts from the 10th to the 16th. Fog developed early during the mornings, mainly in the Belfast area but more extensively on the 13th and 14th. Temperatures remained around average for many areas most of the time although south-eastern areas reached 15 °C on the 15th and 16th. There were showers for many areas on the 17th and 18th driven on by a fresh westerly wind. The 19th was generally dry but windy with westerly gusts reaching 50 mph around the coast.

20th to 31st:

It was a wet start on the 20th although the rain cleared during the early afternoon to leave scattered showers. The 21st started dry and bright but rain spread east during the afternoon, clearing in the early evening. The 22nd was a day of sunshine and showers. The showers on the 23rd were generally more scattered and lighter although it felt cooler in a northwest breeze. A bright and frosty start on the 24th with Derrylin (County Fermanagh) falling to -2.8 °C, but rain spread from the south-west during the afternoon. There were a few showers at first in the north but it was generally dry and sunny on the 25th. On the 26th a weak front moved west bringing some patchy rain to most places during the day. On the 27th there were showers at first and again from early evening with some heavy falls in County Down, but dry and bright in between. A narrow band of rain spread from the south-east on 28th, clearing to leave behind just a few scattered showers. Rain in the north-east extended inland on the 29th before clearing later in the afternoon but it remained mainly overcast. The 30th was cloudy with patchy, light rain for central areas. The 31st was generally dry and bright but an area of rain spread into southern areas during the evening.

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